

Govt bans plastic packaging for gutkha, tobacco and pan masala

The government seeks to reduce generation of non-biodegradable waste such as pouches and sachets

[Mayank Aggarwal](#)



In December 2010, the Supreme Court had restrained manufacturers of gutkha, tobacco and pan masala from using plastic materials in sachets. Photo: Mint

New Delhi: The government has banned the use of plastic for packaging gutkha, tobacco and pan masala, as it seeks to reduce generation of non-biodegradable waste such as pouches and sachets.

“The brand owners of the units manufacturing gutkha, tobacco and pan masala shall have the overall responsibility for implementation of these directions,” the environment ministry said in an order on 29 September, which has been sent to all leading manufacturers of gutkha, tobacco and pan masala across India.

The environment ministry also clarified that these directions will come into force immediately and sought a compliance report within 30 days.

The move is part of the Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules 2016 notified by the ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC) earlier this year.

In December 2010, the Supreme Court had restrained manufacturers of gutkha, tobacco and pan masala from using plastic materials in sachets.

The apex court reiterated the order in 2011 to ensure that no one tries to flout it.

Thereafter, in March 2016, the environment ministry brought PWM Rules 2016 under the Environment Protection Act 1986 to tackle the problem of plastic waste.

According to estimates, 15,000 tonnes of plastic waste is generated daily, of which only 9,000 tonnes is collected and processed.

Through the new rules, the government hopes to increase the overall collection of waste in the country.

The new rules prohibit the use of “plastic material in any form including Vinyl Acetate-Maleic Acid-Vinyl Chloride Copolymer” for packaging gutkha, tobacco and pan masala in any form.

The new order was issued after the government found large scale flouting of its earlier directions and the court order.

“Use of plastic packaging material has been found in the gutkha, tobacco and pan masala being sold in the market. The concerned manufacturers have failed to ensure the compliance to the directions of the Supreme Court as well as the provisions of the PWM Rules 2016 and there is indiscriminate use of the plastic for packaging... Littered plastic sachets/pouches are posing an environmental threat and the manufacturers have not taken effective action to prevent use of plastic in packaging,” said the 29 September order.

“Keeping in view the gravity of the pollution being caused by littered plastic sachets/pouches of gutkha, tobacco and pan masala, the ministry hereby directs your company to stop using plastic material in any form including Vinyl Acetate-Maleic Acid-Vinyl Chloride Copolymer for packaging of Gutkha, tobacco and pan masala in any form and observe strict compliance to the directions of the Supreme Court and provisions of the PWM Rules 2016,” the environment ministry order said.

Environmentalists welcomed the move.

“This is a good move because this packaging is impossible to handle. This waste is so small and it becomes impossible to collect. It’s found littered all over,” said Ravi Agarwal, director at Toxics Link, a New Delhi-based non-profit working on environmental issues.